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New Centrally-sponsored schemes for welfare of people of Bihar, West Bengal and NE States

1652. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTDU: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of new Centrally-sponsored schemes being implemented or proposed to be implemented by her Ministry for the Welfare of the people in Bihar and West Bengal as well as NE States during 2000-2001;

(b) the funds allocated for this purpose;

(c) the amount released, so far, for these schemes and the funds spent thereon, till date; and

(d) the details of achievements made in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) No new Centrally Sponsored Scheme is being implemented or proposed to be implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in Bihar, West Bengal and N-E States during 2000-01.

(b) to (d) Does not arise.

Case of Suicide by Advocate in A.P.

1653. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether 12 women's organizations in Andhra Pradesh have demanded that the case pertaining to suicide by advocate Sangetha Sharma should be handed over to the CBI to ensure proper enquiry; and

(b) if so, the action proposed/taken to help women to fight against sexual harassment by senior lawyers and other anti-social elements in the country, especially in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Welfare of Blinds

1654. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the allocation made for welfare of blinds;
- (b) whether it is a fact that only 8 to 10 per cent of blind children get basic school education in view of limited funding; and
- (c) if so, the action proposed to grant more funds for welfare of blinds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) There is no separate budget provision for visual disability. During the current financial year, 2000-01, a provision of Rs. 230.10 crore (Plan) and Rs. 31.05 crore (Non-Plan) has been provided in the budget of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the disability sector, including visual disability. In addition, Rs. 31.70 crore (Plan) is earmarked for North-East region for this sector.

(b) and (c) Complete data of school going visually handicapped children is not available. According to the National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, out of a total 2,00,000 estimated population of school-going age visually handicapped children, it is normally held that 8 to 10% are getting basic school education. However, this coverage of visually handicapped children cannot be attributed to limited funding only. There are other factors, such as, (a) Reluctance on the part of parents to send a girl blind child to school due to social stigma; (b) Lack of awareness on the part of parents and their over protection; and (c) Location of residential schools—there are many districts in the country not having even a single residential school for the blind thereby denying accessibility to such schools.

Schemes to promote special education, including, special schools,